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tur Ecumenical Publication from THE ALWAYE FELLOWSHIP HOUSE

## Church Weekly

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## An Ecumenical Publication from THE ALWAYE FELLOWSHIP HOUSE

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## "And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]."

## Holy Quran Baqarah Ayat 42



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## Fellowship News

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2021 May

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"We have, in the Book of Hosea, one of the most arresting revelations of the real nature of sin and one of the clearest interpretations of the strength of the Divine Love. No one can read the story of Hosea without realising the agony of his heart. Then lift the human to the level of the infinite, and know this, that sin wounds the heart of God."

"Hosea presents the exhaustless mercy of God which no sin of man can wear out. The master thought of Hosea's message is that God's mighty and inextinguishable Love for Israel will not rest satisfied until it has brought all Israel into harmony with itself."










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## The Dying And The Rising



The picture looks a little surrealistic: three coconut palm trees deprived of their heads in the foreground on the Kodoor river; a collapsing electric power line behind; a hotel building I know to have been unoccupied for a year or so in the far ground - not at all an inspiring sight for a morning walker in these Covid times, of course. However, just when I was about to

click my mobile phone camera, three birds appeared from nowhere and flew past the forlorn palm trees across the greyish sky. That changed everything - the pic and the pic taker. The air laden with forebodings of the second viral wave suddenly turns light and limpid. As the birds flutter their wings rhythmically the air gets spirited, and on the ground my spirit too takes wings. Normally a coconut tree can grow and bear fruit up to 60 to 80 years in healthy surroundings. It is called a "three generations tree", serving the farmer, his children and grandchildren. In our picture the trees lost their heads not because they are too old, but most likely because they were affected by some disease due to environmental degradation. Of course, unlike most other trees, they cannot grow branches once the head is nipped. For people who love the elegant palms that grow tall and sturdy, withstanding the scorching sun and stormy weathers, the sight of their torso rotting away in plain air is sad indeed. Yet if you approach them you will be surprised to see they are home for hundreds of different birds which make nests within the rotten trunk and lay their eggs. In the evenings you can see the birds return to their nests to feed the chicks and rest for the night. What a paradox! A dying and rotting body becomes a cosy bed for new life to emerge! The unbranchable coconut tree branches out to sustain totally different species of life!! ©

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Ringdom of God - 4<br>Dr. T. Jacob John, Vellore

## A Gospel of Health for All



Health for All is a slogan that emerged in 1978 after an international conference of World Health Organisation and ministers of health of many countries, held in Alma Ata in the then USSR, now Almaty in Kazakhstan. The 'Alma Ata declaration' was intended for all low and middle income countries to adopt an agenda for universal primary health care. Progress in providing reasonably good health care to all has been very tardy in India (as well as in many low and middle income countries). Consequently in 2018 there was a follow up international conference in Astana in Kazakhstan, reiterating the urge to establish primary health care, available to all families.

Most rich countries already had universal health care, primary, secondary and even tertiary. The political agenda of universal health care had its origins in Europe. European culture had been evolving over centuries, highly influenced by a biblical world view. Others, particularly Indians, considered European culture to be 'materialistic' and 'anthropocentric'.

During my childhood, the concepts of a materialistic Europe, and a spiritual and nonmaterialistic India were popular and widely accepted. Compact Oxford Dictionary defines materialism as "the belief that material possessions and physical comfort are more important than spiritual values".

That is a caricature of the fundamental meaning of philosophical materialism. Wikipedia
defines it as "a form of philosophical monism that holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature, and that all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions." The Indian philosophical world view holds that the world and all its ingredients are manifestations of God, hence inseparable from God, hence to be venerated and worshipped, but never to be 'dissected' for intellectual curiosity; an extreme or unique world view is that the physical world is unreal, maya, as if in the dream of the sole reality, God.

The clear understanding that the creator and the created are separate, the biblical world view, gave Europeans - both Christians and Jews - the moral freedom and authority to explore the world, and figure out natural laws that governed the physical world. The result was the growth and development of science. Science provided a deep understanding of how the universe works, but not why. Science also gave birth to technology, which gave rise to gadgets for physical comforts and material possessions, which in turn gave rise to the Oxford dictionary understanding of materialism.

Science did not develop in other highly advanced cultures of the world, reinforcing the view expressed above. A quote from Britannica: "On the whole, materialism is contrary to the spirit of both Indian and traditional Chinese philosophy, though the

Carvaka school of materialists flourished from the 6th century BCE until medieval times in India." (https://www.britannica.com/topic/ materialism- philosophy/Twentieth-centurymaterialism)

All cultures must have grappled with the problems of sicknesses and death. Cultures that did not have philosophical materialism tended to conceptualise health and sicknesses based on theories - as Ayurveda (tridosha theory) and Chinese Medicine (blocked flow of chi, the life force) had expounded. Other beliefs that flourished in India included the visitation of seven sister-goddesses, saptamatrikas, to explain seven specific high frequency diseases - smallpox, chickenpox, measles, rubella, mumps, rheumatic fever and swollen body (either nephrotic syndrome or kwashiorkor). Polio was a low frequency disease, hence not attributed to a goddess. It was called 'bala-graha-dosha' meaning the evil influence of planets - infants could not be blamed for indiscretion leading to imbalance of doshas. So an extrinsic malevolent force was invoked.

In Jewish tradition disease was the result of $\sin$ - either of the person or even of the parents. Jesus clarified that it was not - that disease is a "natural process". When he healed the paralytic, he forgave his sins and healed him also, clearly marking both as human need, but separate in meaning. Demon possession was an 'extrinsic cause' out of one's control. Remember, not Satan, not Devil, but demon, an extraneous evil.

Microbes could not be discovered in India since experimental exploration of nature was anti-cultural. Science, as it was accepted as an ally to European Medicine, began unravelling causes of various diseases, mainly microbial, as is well known to those with school or college education.

All in all, in contemporary times diagnosis and treatment of diseases are generally a 'secular' activity. They belong to the physical world of humans and we extend it to animals and plants too. Religion is supposed to belong to the spiritual world, involving humans, because we are spiritual beings - with body, mind and soul. No religion, barring Christianity, has healing of sickness as a religious dharma. Buddhism promotes 'good deeds' in the present life, to earn karmic merit in the next life, and included in good deeds is caring for the sick. When AIDS struck the world, countries with Buddhist culture, Thailand for example, showed compassion and care to people with AIDS - this I have seen with my own eyes.

Back to the call for health for all -- a political and development agenda. One may say that it is a good governance agenda too. Its ideological underpinning is the earlier United Nations declaration that health is a human right. But by what stretch of imagination can the world see health for all embedded in a religion? Do not faith and religion belong to the spiritual domain of human existence and transactions? A religion for health for all, in that conventional thinking, is almost oxymoron, until we explore the principles of the kingdom of God.
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18)

Healing and health are integral to the kingdom values. One side of the coin is liberation from oppression (social justice) and the other, healing of sicknesses (health care).

In neither, we all know, success is guaranteed. Mother Theresa used to say: "We are called upon to be faithful, not successful". Success in every endeavour has many factors, not merely the personal efforts of the kingdom people.

Oppression is by human choice, evil choice, of the oppressor. Solidarity with the unjustly oppressed is the kingdom response. Do Churches constantly watch out for any and all unjust oppressions in society and search for solutions, collectively and individually? Are we ourselves oppressors in any context or form?

Sicknesses have several causative factors. Nature plays its own part in both cause and course, including genetics and infections. Ignorance, unwise personal choices, irresponsibility to each other and the like are all causes of sicknesses. One disease, AIDS, exemplified all the above causative factors, so much so, there was a prevalent belief in the 1980 s , across religions and cultures, that it was God's punishment on human sexual perversity and immorality. The kingdom values stood out in stark contrast - Jesus repeatedly declaring that diseases and natural calamities are not God's punishment for sin. Of course sin may have consequences, including sicknesses and even premature death, but such consequences are not to be attributed to punishment by God. We all know that COVID-19 is caught just by breathing air when one is near others. Here ignorance, foolishness or irresponsible action does not apply, like they did for AIDS. If AIDS could be caught through the very act of procreation, COVID could result from mere social conduct that is fundamental human nature. Both are spotlights on us, and our fault lines. Being "good" prevented getting AIDS, but for COVID we needed to adopt new behaviour dictated by scientific knowledge, intelligence,
motivation and discipline. No vaccine is effective for protection from AIDS but vaccine is the only answer for restoring normal social activities in times of COVID.

The Sanskrit word dharma has no true counterpart in English. Traditionally therefore dharma is applied to religions of Indian origin Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. Dharma can be used almost as a synonym for any one of these religions - hence in a broad sense, it stands for religion. It can also be applied to the Christian religion especially when the kingdom values are superimposed - Sanskritized as 'Christava dharma' which insists on healing humans from sicknesses - not just members of Christian religion only, but all humans, irrespective of their many and various attributes. It also sounds strange that a religion demands the healing from sickness of people belonging to other religions as well - or, for that matter, irrespective of their stand on religion or spirituality - whether or not the individual is an atheist, agnostic or a believer in God.

All humans are precious and their 'sufferings' must be mitigated, according to Christava dharma. God loves them all and we should too. The concept that humans are created in the image of God underscores why all are precious. Even the blind, those who are physically or mentally challenged or underdeveloped - the least, poorest, weakest, are all humans and worthy of our love and care. Christava dharma mandates that we love each other and within the ambit of that love, to mitigate the suffering due to sickness. Under this setting, a religion for health for all is unique. Universal health care is thus true to the kingdom values.
(To be continued)

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# Prima Donna and Programmatic Approaches in Scientific Research 



(Continued)

## 5. Programmatic Research and World War II

Let us now come back to programmatic research. Programmatic research which originated during World War II created amazing new technologies. 1. Physicists created the sonar, radar, radio-sensing bombs and amphibious tanks. 2. Chemists produced intensely efficient and lethal chemical weapons including the infamous war gases. 3. Biologists studied the effects of high altitude survival and sea water ingestion. 4. Mathematicians cracked the secret codes of the military.

## 6. Programmatic Research and the making of atom bomb the Manhattan project

The undisputed crown jewel of this targeted effort was the atomic bomb. The bomb had been designed not by Prima Donna University Professors wandering about in search of obscure truths, but by a focused SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) team of researchers sent off to accomplish a concrete mission. A new model of scientific governance emerged from the project - research driven by specific mandates, time lines and goals (frontal attack science) - which had produced the remarkable technological boom during the war.

This project was named Manhattan Project and it overturned the prevailing model of scientific discovery. The project was jointly headed by J. Robert Oppenheimer and Col. Leslie Groves from the military side.

It all started with Leo Szilard (Hungarian immigrant scientist) and Albert Einstein writing a letter to the U.S. President, Franklin Roosevelt in 1938 expressing the fear that Hitler would build an atom bomb after the word spread that German scientists had split the Uranium atom. The project was set up by OSRD (Office of Scientific Research and Development) whose Director was the MIT trained Vanneur Bush. The project could bring together all prominent scientists from the US, the UK and Canada (it was a joint venture) like Albert Einstein, Enrico Fermi, Compton, Otto Hahn, Hans Bethe, Edward Teller and many more.

The Manhattan project which was set up in the wake of the attack of Pearl Harbour was spread over 40 laboratories and employed 200,000 people and ran from 1942 to 1946. The total cost was 2 billion dollars ( 25.8 billion dollars at current prices or ₹ 140,000 crores).

## 7. Programmatic Research and the god particle - the CERN project

The newest Programmatic Research is
that for discovering the Higg's Boson - the god particle - thought to be involved in giving other particles their mass, the last undiscovered in our current ( standard) model of subatomic particles. It is a venture of the European Union supported by 20 member nations and 6 observer nations.

The large Hadron Collidor set up by CERN to discover Higg's Boson ( CERN, The European organization for Nuclear Research, is one of the world's largest and most respected centres for scientific research) is 27 Km in circumference, located 100 m below ground, on the Swiss - French border near Geneva. There are 9500 magnets, each weighing 2000 tons. The vacuum inside is perfect and it is the world's largest refrigerator. It is a gigantic scientific instrument. It employs 2400 full timers, 1500 part timers, 10,000 scientists from 608 Universities and of 113 nationalities. The cost is 4.2 billion dollars and running cost in 2012 was $\$ 1.2$ billion.

## 8. Conclusion

When Governments and funding agencies made the shift from Prima Donna to Programmatic Research, there has been a marked decline in major discoveries. This is starkly evident in medicine. In 1996, 53 new drugs were approved by FDA ( Food and Drug Administration) while only 20 in 2005 and that involved a record spending of $\$ 38$ billion per year. For every 5000 compounds the industry screens as potential medicines, only one is approved for sale. The time frame: the screening process, various stages of animal and clinical trials, FDA approval and mass production take 16 years. The cost of every successful event is $₹ 10,000$ crores. Consequently new medicines become very expensive. This is how programmatic research works in medicine.

The majority of discoveries in the past used to be the result of Prima Donna research. Though costs remained low, Prima Donna research has its limitations. After the discovery of penicillin, Alexander Fleming had pointed out that it has clinical potentials, both as a topical antiseptic and as an injectable antibiotic, if it could be isolated and purified. Fleming, working with two young researchers, failed to stabilise and purify penicillin. Therapeutic development of penicillin required multidisciplinary teamwork.

Steward Alexander's report on the tragedy at Bari suggested the significance of mustard oil components for the possible treatment of cancers of the tissues that form white blood cells. Realising the importance of Alexander's serendipitous discovery, follow up studies were done at Yale and by Merck which resulted in the development of the first chemotherapy drug.

Technological advances based on discoveries in basic sciences came mostly through programmatic research. However the problem with programmatic research is that it involves massive infrastructure, big logistical problems and huge expenses.

Both Prima Donna and Programmatic research have their own merits and demerits. A judicious combination of the two can help us to address many of our problems. However, when the world is in the grip of a scourge like COVID-19, the Prima Donna approach becomes a luxury and we have to pool our resources and use them as military SWAT teams do.

Ref : Happy Accidents : Serendipity in Modern Medical Breakthroughs by Morton A. Meyers.
(Concluded)


Who is a prophet? According to the Oxford dictionary, a prophet is one who foretells the future, inspired by God. If we use that definition, we can certainly include Noah among the prophets. In fact, he would be the very first prophet in the Bible. Noah belonged to the 10th generation from Adam. His great grandfather was Enoch who walked with God. God was so pleased with him that He took him straight to heaven without his having to die. Noah's grandfather was Methuselah who lived the longest on earth, 969 years.

The name Methuselah means flood would come the year he dies. The flood did come when he died.

Let us get back to Noah. In Hebrews 11 :7 we read "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith." When God told Noah about the flood that He was going to send upon the Earth in judgement, he believed God and acted on it. There had never been a flood
on the Earth before this time. In fact, up till then, there was even no rain. Noah was living far away from the sea. In fact, I wonder if he had ever seen the sea. So, when God told him about a flood which he had not seen or understood, he still believed God.

God was speaking to the people of Noah's day in many different ways. But no one was listening or caring for God's message. God wanted to be kind and spare as many people as possible from the destruction He was planning. Hence Noah was appointed to deliver the message and to build the ark in front of the unbelieving people. God probably hoped that at least when they see the ark being built, they would believe. It was not to be. Why was God so angry with the people? We see the reason given in Genesis 6: 5-6, "When the Lord God saw the extent of human wickedness, and that the trend and direction of men's lives were only towards evil, he was sorry He had made them. It broke His heart". 6:11-" Meanwhile, the crime rate was rising rapidly across the Earth and as seen by God, the world was rotten to the core." (Living Bible)

Here was a Godly man, trying his best to live a Godly life. Genesis 6: 8-10 - "But Noah was a pleasure to the Lord. He was the only truly righteous man living on the Earth at that time. He tried always to conduct his affairs according to God's will."
In God's sight Noah was righteous. But Noah was not perfect. After the flood, Noah became drunk and lay down naked. So men may not consider him righteous, but God did and that is what matters.

Now, let us see why God considered Noah righteous.

1. Noah believed God's message about the destruction that God was going to send to the Earth. That is what made him righteous in God's sight. In Noah's days, the bible says, life went on as usual. People were going about their jobs, people were marrying, there were child births, baptisms and funerals. They did not understand God's holiness and His total opposition to sin, and the consequences of sin.
2. Noah obeyed God and got into the Ark when God commanded him. After Noah, his family, all the animals, birds and reptiles got in, God shut the door from outside. Have you ever wondered why God closed the door and not Noah? If it was Noah, when the floods came he would have been tempted to let some more people in. Here, God's decision was final. 3. Noah was asked to loudly proclaim about the coming judgement and the need for people to turn away from their wicked ways, so that they could escape the flood. It took Noah 120 years to build the ark. All that time while building the ark he was warning the people about the serious message from God. According to the old accounts of the bible what Noah built was called a TEBO. It was just a box-like
rectangular structure, not a boat as we understand it now. This boat did not have an engine, a rudder or a sail. This was a structure to save Noah and his family.
3. Noah was asked to apply tar to seal it. This symbolised God's favour and protection over the boat and themselves. Once the horrendous rain began, they were absolutely under God's mercy. The boat had no means to control itself. That meant that whoever was inside was absolutely under God's care and direction. Absolute trust in God's promises and His plan was a prerequisite for this venture.
4. The first thing that Noah did after the flood waters receded was to build an altar to worship God. His worship and sacrifice were like a sweet-smelling offering to God and it greatly pleased Him. Genesis 8:20 - "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it". The thing that was foremost in his mind was his thankfulness to God and his utter dependence on God.

Let us ask ourselves the following questions:

1. Do we absolutely believe in God's word?
2. Do we obey His commands totally?
3. Do we sincerely tell others what God is revealing to us His commands and His directions?
4. Do we cast our cares on God's mercy?
5. Do we have a family altar in our homes to worship God?
These 5 things in Noah's life made him righteous in God's sight. God is still looking for people who would believe Him and obey Him.

## Life Stule

Dr. Annie David

## How Do You Define FAITH?



Can you define faith? What do you mean by faith in God? Can you explain it to someone? You may not be able to do it; much less will you be able to get someone to have faith in God. It is something that one has to experience for oneself, with help from God Himself perhaps.

You may not have much / any faith in God. That may not mean that you are totally opposed to it. If you begin to have some vague experience of it in your mind, induced by some factor, human or nonhuman, which defies your recognition, you may not make an effort to drive it out. Not encouraging it in any way, you may just let it be; you may just leave it alone. If, by some chance, it becomes a little active within you, there is every chance that some faith (in God) gets kindled within you. There are known cases where faith has got kindled in this manner - in spite of there being no co-operation whatsoever from the person(s) concerned.

As indicated above, nobody can induce faith in you; but faith may get kindled in you without any of your involvement; there are instances in which this has happened. Can you stretch your imagination a little in order to figure out the nature of the faint stirrings of faith you may experience within you? It could turn out to be a fascinating exercise - very absorbing and rewarding in many ways. Let us move forward a little on these lines.

If and when there is no resistance from you, God begins to act. Only God can help
you to engender faith. If you do not resist Him, God will act. That is the wonder of it. We fail to receive many a blessing by putting up a resistance, knowingly or unknowingly. Most of our failings are because of our refusal to let God act.

A submissive attitude of the mind is something that can be cultivated - with some effort - if only you can make up your mind to put in the effort. It is not enough not to be resistant; that is a negative attitude; one has to be positive. Having a positive approach to matters is the very basis for good health, both physical and mental. Who wouldn't want to be healthy? Any normal human being is bound to be receptive towards anything which would offer him a better quality of life. As long as it is not too demanding, he should be willing to co-operate. Just tell yourself you are co-operating with God Himself; let God act, and He will work wonders in you.

Don't imagine that there can't be any more miracles, that they have stopped happening altogether. Not at all! As long as God exists, there can be miracles; it is just that you have prevented them from happening. Withdraw your resistance, and then watch out ! Faith is the assurance of things not seen. Just keep telling yourself that God still reigns supreme; that is where your faith begins. You will begin to see things unfolding in the most unexpected ways. It is all in your mind, in your attitude; expect miracles to happen, and they are bound to happen!


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## Current Covid-19 situation...

"We not only did not anticipate the second wave, but we also neglected our genomic analysis. It is a pity that we have the wherewithal, the labs, the people and the expertise, but we just did not care because the number of cases was coming down."
-Dr. T. Jacob John, Clinical Virologist and former Professor at the Christian Medical College, Vellore. "This is an unforeseen, unimagined kind of surge in the pandemic... despite all my optimism. If the numbers are increasing daily, we are going to be in much more trouble as it has every potential to get much worse before the situation improves."
-Satyanarayana Mysore, Interventional Pulmonologist at Manipal Hospitals, Bengaluru. "The alarmingly high daily numbers are because of convergence of the epidemic peaking simultaneously in multiple locations."
-Himanshu Negandhi, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Indian Institute of Public Health, Delhi.
"Currently looking at several mathematical models, the peak seems to be in the second or third week of May. The issue is that much of it will change, depending on the interventions we will make."
-Giridhar R. Babu, Professor of Epidemiology, Public Health Foundation of India.
"The second wave is expected to peak by mid-May. We are already observing some plateauing in some parts of Maharashtra. I would not say that the infrastructure has collapsed.... it is stressed."

- B.S. Ajaikumar, Executive Chairman, HealthCare Global Enterprises, Bengaluru. "We can set up hospitals with 20-50 beds. But the main challenge is manpower. Currently, the staff is under extreme stress due to extended work hours and many have been infected. So, there's a shortage of healthcare workforce. Even after paying extra money, we don't get suitable skilled manpower. We need to address this challenge because even if this wave subsides, we can't rule out a worse third or fourth wave."
- Rajendra Patel, Epidemiologist, (Govt. of Gujarat).
"Though the severity of the cases is similar to last year, the overall number of cases is rising, indicating that the virus is more infectious now."
-Sayan Chakraborty, Consultant, Infectious Diseases, AMRI Dhakuria Hospital.
"While the new strain of the virus is dangerous, people are dying mainly because of lack of beds, ventilators, medicines and injectables - insufficient hospital arrangements in the State."
- Dr.Apoorwa Verma, South-East Central Railway Hospital, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh.

Time calls for vigilance and prudence from Governments, Authorities, Citizens, Managements, Workers: Safety measures, Precautionary measures, Protocols, Sanitisation, Masks, Social Distancing... Now or never.

Compiled by : Santhosh Oommen

## 70 years ago

Dr. James Reid

## The Faith of God

An atheist disowned his daughter because she had married a man who was a Christian. Towards the end of his life, he sent for his son-in-law, with the desire to justify his position. At the end of every discussion he would say, "Don't delude yourself. I am not repentant. I still don't believe in God." At last the daughter said quietly, "Yes Father, but God believes in you." With that simple word the old man's resistance was swept away.

We lay great stress on our faith in God, but do we realise the amazing truth of God's faith in us? Through Creation, the world and the human race came into being. It was an act of faith - God's faith in us. He made this wonderful world, set us in it, and left us free to make it or mar it. It was His faith that we would respond to His trust and in time become a harmonious and united family.

In the end He sent Jesus, unprotected, with no legion of angels to guard Him, and no weapon in His hands save that of invincible love. The advent of Jesus was God's faith in the power of love and in man's capacity to respond to it. 'Surely they will reverence my Son."

The same faith was shown by Jesus Himself. He left the work He had begun in the hands of a little group of simple men and women, without position or influence or great intellectual gifts. "Go", He said to them "and preach the gospel to every creature."

Has this faith been justified? There have been disappointments, but there have been glorious results as well. Men
and women have risen to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Of them, it was written that "God is not ashmed to be called their God."

Many people today are being swept by waves of pessimism about the future. Do not let us forget God's faith. As the prophet Isaiah has it, "The mirage shall become a pool."

The thought of God's faith in us can be a mighty incentive. It can awaken all that is best in us.

To believe that we can succeed is the first step out of the morass of defeat. Jesus set himself to awaken it in discouraged souls by His own faith in them. "Neither do I condemn thee," He said to the sinful woman who was sunk in her own impotence. "Go and sin no more". All she needed was to believe that a new life was possible, and by His faith in her, Jesus opened the gates of it. That is what He is saying to all of us, if we will listen to Him.

Are we caught in some mesh of evil habit, facing some difficulty or bearing some burden? He has faith that we can be more than conquerors. Are we tempted to think that the Christian way on which we have set out is too difficult a road for us? "Ye have not chosen me," He says to us, "but I have chosen you, that you should bring forth fruit." That is His faith.

Nothing God asks of us is beyond us. God believes in us. To realise that is the secret of power. It is the only way to the belief in ourselves which is both humble and victorious.


Ththe Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath unto Jehovah, thy God: (in it) thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." This is the 'Jewish Sabbath', which originated from the age-old belief that God rested on the seventh day, after the hectic creation work of six days. The official sanction for this came from God to Moses in their meeting on Mt. Sinai. The basic assumption is that the Sabbath which means the 'day of rest' falls on Saturday.

In AD 321, Emperor Constantine-I changed the day of rest to 'Sunday'. So this became the 'Christian Sabbath'. The majority of people all over the world consider 'Sunday' as the first day of the week, and some take 'Monday' as the first day. Depending on this, the seventh day also will change from Saturday to Sunday. Whatever it may be, the established fact is that we have to take rest at least for one day after working for six days in a week.

Now, in the wake of the massive Corona pandemic, our Prime Minister conceived, Chief Ministers delivered and Local Administration proclaimed 'Sabbath' on Saturdays and Sundays: "Neither thou, nor thy son or daughter, nor your servant or maid, nor your car or scooter, shall come out of your house on these two days... And those who come out shall bear the wrath of the rulers and suffer the punishment of Corona Devi... Thou shalt not appear in groups... Thou shalt not go to thy temples and churches... Thou shalt keep distance from others and from all functions, social or
religious"... And the rest you know, take rest on these two days.

This is Sabbath returned... It does not matter whether Saturday or Sunday is the Sabbath day... or whether it is Jewish or Christian... as the Government has combined both to make our Desi Sabbath! The only difference is that we have renamed it as 'Containment' or 'Lockdown'.

In this connection, the mention in Nehemiah 13:19-22 invokes special interest. There we see how Sabbath was observed at the time of Nehemiah, a Jewish leader of the 5th century BC. The gates of Jerusalem used to be shut on the Sabbath eve (evening before Saturday); and they would remain closed till Sabbath was over. Merchants were not allowed to enter; and they were kept far away, as a rule. The gates were kept under surveillance and the people were asked to observe Sabbath, sanctifying the day.

Now we have to remain indoors... and to attend holy worship online... This reminds us a lot of what was told thousands of years ago. There is a universal call for 'retreat' or 'withdrawal', reverberating through centuries, although the causes may differ. But do we enjoy this enforced leisure? To be honest, NO... as it is thrust upon us... as it is not our choice... but we are in the 'Garden of Eden'... we know our freedom... and the restrictions too... You can eat anything... but not from the tree in the middle... The choice is left to you... To be (compliant) or not to be... to choose between life and death... This enforced leisure is a feeble attempt on our part to preserve life... make the right decision to 'sanctify' this Sabbath! ©


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